

Standard Operating Procedure

Sharps Injury Prevention and Disposal

“Sharps” as defined by the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) is, “any object that can puncture or penetrate skin”. The use of needles and syringes, scalpels, razor blades, glass slides, Pasteur pipettes, pipette tips, cover slips, knives, IV tubing with attached needles, capillary tubes, scissors, forceps, similar sharp items which may cause self-inoculation and other “sharps” is part of research activity. The use of these items presents an opportunity for cuts, abrasions, and puncture wounds. This is just as true in animal-related research, whether or not infectious agents, radioisotopes or hazardous chemicals are included in your work.

When working with animals, keep in mind the potential for zoonotic infection. Many experimental procedures with animals also involve the use of cytotoxic drugs, chemical agents, and other potentially hazardous materials. Only luer-lock syringes should be used to aspirate fluids from animals infected with human pathogens or zoonotic disease agent so that collected fluid can be safely discharged.

Two of the most common causes of needle sticks are re-capping needles and improper disposal of needles. All needle sticks, and other sharps injuries, carry the risk of secondary infections in addition to exposure to the needle’s content and/or contamination on the outside of the needle or other sharp instrument. Needle/syringe usage may also present a risk of exposure to infectious agents or other hazardous materials via sprays and aerosols – particularly from non-needle-locking syringes.

Use of Biohazard Sharps Containers

Needles, syringes, razor blades, glass slides, Pasteur pipettes, pipette tips, cover slips, capillary tubes, and other sharp items shall be placed in an approved puncture resistant Biohazard Sharps Container specifically designed for the storage of used sharps.

- Whenever possible, place a Biohazard Sharps Container within an arm’s reach of the area where sharps are used. Position the biohazard sharps container low enough in the work area so that you can readily visualize the opening.
- Work with only one uncapped hypodermic needle at a time. Keep uncapped needles and other sharps in view.
 - DO NOT place a needle cap in your mouth in order to remove the cap.
 - DO NOT leave sharps unattended.
- Used needles must not be cut, bent, broken, or recapped by hand before disposal due to increased chance for injury when needles are manipulated. **The recapping, purposeful bending, breaking, removing from disposable syringes, or other manual manipulations of needles is strictly prohibited.**
- Immediately dispose of a used hypodermic syringe and needle, as a unit, directly into a sharps container, **without any further manipulations.**
- Avoid handling any broken, contaminated glassware directly by hand, even if wearing gloves. Use a device such as tongs, forceps, or brush and dustpan.
- Biohazard Sharps Containers should be located in all areas where needles and sharps are used.
 - Do not overfill biohazard sharps containers.
 - Do not force a sharps item into a container, or retrieve a discarded item.
 - Containers should be kept in the upright position at all times.
 - Discard Biohazard Sharps Containers when they are $\frac{3}{4}$ full.



Biomedical Research Support Facility

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- Biohazard Sharps Containers are Regulated Medical Waste and must be disposed of through the Office of Environmental Health and Safety (EH & S).
- All Biohazard Sharps Containers identified for disposal in the Biomedical Research Support Facility (BRSF) must be placed in the autoclave and run through a decontamination cycle before arranging with EH & S for disposal.